Free Will in the Bible

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1. God as the Creator of Free Will: God created humans with the ability to make choices. This is a sign of free will, allowing humans to choose between good and evil.

Genesis 1:26-27 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<26> And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
<27> And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

This verse from the book of Genesis describes how God created humans in His own image, often interpreted as an indication of humanity's capacity for reason, morality, and free will. The fact that humans were made in God's image implies that they possess qualities such as love, justice, and indeed free will, which are part of God's nature.

2. Biblical Exhortations to Choose: The Bible contains many exhortations for people to make choices. For example, in Joshua 24:15 - American Standard Version (ASV) <15> And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

There are other verses in the Bible that also talk about making decisions:
Deuteronomy 30:15-16 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<15> See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;
<16> in that I command thee this day to love Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, that thou mayest live and multiply, and that Jehovah thy God may bless thee in the land whither thou goest in to possess it.

Ezekiel 18:21-23 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<21> But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.
<22> None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.
<23> Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live?

Ezekiel 46:12 - American Standard Version (ASV)

<12> And when the prince shall prepare a freewill-offering, a burnt-offering or peace-offerings as a freewill-offering unto Jehovah, one shall open for him the gate that looketh toward the east; and he shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings, as he doth on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth one shall shut the gate.

Exodus 36:3 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<3> and they received of Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, wherewith to make it. And they brought yet unto him freewill-offerings every morning.

More verses that speak about freedom:
John 8:36 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<36> If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Galatians 5:13 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<13> For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.

Revelation 22:17 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<17> And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

Romans 6:18 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<18> and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.

3. Responsibility for Sins: In the Bible, people are held accountable for their sins. This means that they had the freedom to act differently and consciously chose to sin.

Verses:
Ezekiel 18:20 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<20> The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Galatians 6:5 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<5> For each man shall bear his own burden.

Proverbs 9:12 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<12> If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself; And if thou scoffest, thou alone shalt bear it.

James 1:14-15 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<14> but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed.

<15> Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.

2 Corinthians 5:10 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<10> For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

4. The Teaching of Repentance: The call to repentance and turning away from sin, as found in the Bible, assumes that people have the freedom to turn away from their sins and turn toward God.

Verses:
Luke 13:3 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<3> I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.

Acts 3:19 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<19> Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;

Matthew 4:17 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<17> From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

2 Peter 3:9 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<9> The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Revelation 2:5 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<5> Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.

Romans 8:29-30 Argument
Romans 8:29-30 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<29> For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren:
<30> and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

God has indeed chosen some people for His plan, but they have voluntarily decided to do what God wants.

Example: Mary (the Mother of God)
Luke 1:28 - American Standard Version (ASV)

<28> And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee.

She was chosen by God in this verse, but in another verse, she says that everything should happen as God wills. So she agreed to God’s plan to bring the Messiah into the world.

Verse:
Luke 1:38 - American Standard Version (ASV)
<38> And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Logical Argument
Many claim that humans do not have free will because God knows our future, is all-knowing, and knows all our decisions.

However, this does not mean that He dictates our decisions. Furthermore, it would limit God’s omnipotence, as it would imply that He cannot create beings capable of making independent choices and determining their own future. Another heresy (Calvinism) claims that God decides whether we go to heaven or hell. However, this is also incorrect because God desires our love. Love cannot be forced; it must be voluntary. While God already knows our decision to accept or reject Him, we make that choice ourselves.

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